

The Role of State Government

State government's health responsibilities grow from our State Constitution's commitment to provide for the public health and welfare and to care for our most vulnerable populations. The Legislature has interpreted these duties to entail:

Maintaining and Improving Public Health

- Keeping records of births and deaths and monitoring patterns of illness and disease
- Acting swiftly and effectively to control the spread of communicable diseases,
- Reducing preventable diseases and injuries,
- Protecting the safety of our food, water, and air.
- Safeguarding the health of vulnerable populations by assuring that every resident has health services critical to their ability to lead healthy, independent, and productive lives.

Purchasing Health Services

- Purchasing health service for the poor, dependent children, the disabled, the elderly, injured workers, prisoners and public employees
- Ensuring that these public investments return the greatest possible value for our state's taxpayers by working constantly to contain the costs and improve the quality of these health services.

Regulating Health Facilities, Health Providers and the Health Insurance Industry

- Ensuring that health care professionals and health facilities meet minimum safety standards and encouraging them to strive for the highest level of quality.
- Ensuring that health insurers remain solvent to meet their commitments to their policy holders and that the private insurance market operates fairly and equitably for our state's health insurance consumers.

Strategic Policy Directions for 2003-05

State government must periodically re-examine these duties and strategically focus resources to respond to new health threats, to take advantage of new health discoveries, and to live within the ever-changing financial and social realities of our state and nation. Our strategic health policy directions for 2003-2005 are:

- Maintain and improve access to health critical services.
- Improve the value of investments in government-purchased health services.
- Bolster the health system's capacity to respond to public health emergencies.
- Reduce the disproportionate disease burdens among Native Americans, African Americans and other groups.
- Encourage responsible behavior to reduce tobacco use, improve nutrition, and increase physical activity.